

## Message Text

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ACTION OPIC-06

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 EB-07 AID-05 L-03 COME-00

TRSE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /039 W

-----070452Z 044321 /12

R 061000Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9671

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0824

DEPT ALSO PASS AID/W

ALSO FOR OPIC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EINV, DM, US

SUBJ: MORRISON-KNUDSEN EQUIPMENT SEIZURE

REF: A. COTONOU 0790 B. STATE 100149

1. ON MAY 4 I CALLED ON PROTOCOL DIRECTOR ROGER PAQUI, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS, AND INFORMED HIM OF MORRISON-KNUDSEN (M-K) EQUIPMENT IMPOUNDMENT IN KANDI. IN DISCUSSING M-K'S DIFFICULTIES WITH PAQUI I NOTED THAT IF OPIC WERE TO AGREE WITH M-K'S CLAIM, IT WOULD PUT OUR RELATIONS INTO THE SAME DIFFICULT POSITION WHICH EXISTED IN 1975 AND 1976 FOLLOWING EXPROPRIATION OF MOBIL AND TEXACO ASSETS. I STRESSED TO PAQUI THAT AT THIS STAGE WE CONSIDERED THE NEGOTIATION TO BE ONE BETWEEN CONTRACTOR AND BENINESE GOVERNMENT BUT THAT WE WISHED TO USE OUR GOOD OFFICES TO HEAD OFF A POSSIBLY DIFFICULT AND UNNECESSARY SITUATION.

2. PAQUI REPLIED THAT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THE SEIZURE OF THE EQUIPMENT RESULTED FROM A MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN MINISTRIES. HE FELT THAT IF THE BENINESE DEVELOPMENT BANK DIRECTOR BABA-MOUSSA HAD ASSURED M-K THAT EQUIPMENT WOULD

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BE RELEASED, GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE GOOD ON PROMISE. HE ASKED US TO SUBMIT A DIPLOMATIC NOTE MERELY NOTING THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION AND NOT MENTIONING CONSEQUENCES AT THIS TIME. PAQUI SAID THAT GIVEN THE DELICACY OF THE GOVERNMENTAL SITUATION IN BENIN, MENTION OF CONSEQUENCES AT THIS STAGE MIGHT BE MISINTERPRETED AND COULD FURTHER COMFUZE THE ISSUE. IF M-K DOES NOT RECEIVE SATISFACTION AFTER THE FIRST NOTE, A

FURTHER COMMUNICATION COULD REFER TO JEOPARDY IN WHICH  
EXPROPRIATION CLAIM COULD PLACE US-BENIN RELATIONS.

3. DIPLOMATIC NOTE ALONG LINES SUGGESTED BY PAQUI WAS DELIVERED  
TO MINISTRY MAY 6. NOTE ALSO INCLUDED REFERENCE TO FIRST  
TRANCHE OF PRICE AGREED UPON IN APRIL 13 CONTRACT. SINCE  
BABA-MOUSSA IS OUT OF COUNTRY IT IS UNLIKELY THAT BENINESE  
WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION UNTIL HIS RETURN.  
PAQUI PROMISED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH BABA-MOUSSA, WHO IS PER-  
SONAL FRIEND, AS SOON AS LATTER RETURNS SO THAT PROBLEM CAN  
BE RESOLVED AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE.  
THOMPSON

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CLAIMS, CONFISCATION, EQUIPMENT, INVESTMENTS  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Subject:** MORRISON-KNUDSEN EQUIPMENT SEIZURE  
**TAGS:** EINV, DM, US, OPIC, MORRISON-KNUDSEN  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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